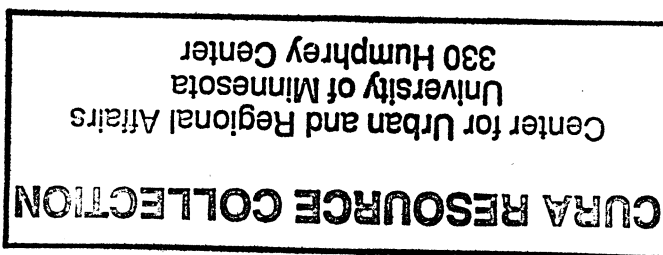


Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

Neighborhood Housing Condition
Survey Methodology

by Linda McCarthy

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.



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September, 1996.

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1. Introduction

The Sheridan Neighborhood is the gateway to northeast Minneapolis. It is bounded by the Mississippi River to the west, Washington Street NE to the east, Broadway to the south, and 17th Avenue NE to the North. It is home to more than 2,700 residents in over 1,200 households. More than 75 percent of the neighborhood housing is single-family, with much of it constructed prior to 1920. Like other northeast Minneapolis neighborhoods, Sheridan has a high rate of long-term residents and a large percentage of senior-owned homes.

Sheridan Today and Yesterday (STAY) has been an active neighborhood organization for a number of years. STAY's NRP Steering Committee was formed to guide the neighborhood's involvement in the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Planning (NRP) process. By the beginning of the summer of 1996, the neighborhood was still at a relatively early stage in the NRP process. Nevertheless, the residents in Sheridan have already identified substandard housing as the top concern for the neighborhood. The STAY/NRP Steering Committee, and especially its Housing Committee, therefore, needed to research neighborhood housing conditions in order to assist them in developing a NRP Action Plan to address the substandard housing in Sheridan.

The involvement of the graduate research assistant was, therefore, intended to provide research assistance to the STAY/NRP Housing Steering Committee in its task of assessing neighborhood housing conditions and the approaches to supporting resident housing investment to improve housing conditions in Sheridan. It was decided that this dual-track process, then, would involve a survey to identify the "worst" fifty or so residential parcels, at the same time as determining the most appropriate funding mechanisms and partnership approaches to achieving the refurbishment and, if necessary, the demolition of the buildings in the worst condition which had been identified in the survey.

The main product of this summer research work was intended to be the housing condition survey. The purpose of this report is not, therefore, to summarize housing conditions in Sheridan or to discuss the implications of the survey for housing

improvement programs. The purpose of this report rather is primarily to record the methodology followed in producing the "hit list" of the "worst" fifty or so residential parcels in Sheridan. This report, therefore, includes the list of those 59 residential buildings identified as most in need of improvement (Appendix 4).

2. Library Research

The first step in the research was to gather some background information on the Sheridan neighborhood and its housing. At the same time, where useful, information was collected for other Minneapolis neighborhoods which had also identified housing as a top priority. This research was carried out by referencing such sources as:

- The 1990 Census of Population and Housing for the Sheridan neighborhood, and other useful information on the NPCR's World Wide Web page;
- Existing publications, especially, Defining Community: A Neighborhood Perspective, (1995), by the University of Minnesota's Design Center for American Urban Landscape. This contains extremely useful information based on the first 19 neighborhood action plans approved by the City of Minneapolis' NRP Policy Board. Of particular usefulness for Sheridan was the Appendix to this publication. The Appendix includes "Neighborhood NRP Funding Strategies" which set out the implementation strategies and partners that these 19 neighborhoods included in their action plans.
- NPCR project reports held in the CURA library (also available on the NPCR's World Wide Web page). These included:
 - a) Historical Assessment of Holland Community Housing (1995),
 - b) Whittier Homeownership Center Targeting Project Report (1994); and
 - c) McKinley Community Property Value Change Analysis (1995).

3. Minneapolis Public Works Department Maps and Housing Condition Data

The next stage in the research was to access existing data on housing condition in Sheridan maintained by the City of Minneapolis. This information was sought in order to

initially identify the group of parcels containing housing in the worst condition in Sheridan based on the City's most up-to-date records. The City's Public Works Department "Print Room" maintains a dataset of information for each parcel gathered from various departments within the City. The "Print Room" also produces maps based on this information.

The dataset is maintained in the format of a Parcel Information List which provides the following information for each parcel:

- 1) Parcel Identification Number;
- 2) Address of Property;
- 3) Owner's Name;
- 4) Taxpayer's Name;
- 5) Taxpayer's Address;
- 6) Use Code;
- 7) Whether the parcel is homestead or not;
- 8) Zone Code;
- 9) Lot Width;
- 10) Lot Depth;
- 11) Lot Area;
- 12) Condition Code;
- 13) Property Type;
- 14) Ward;
- 15) Property Type Category (Residence; Apartment; or Commercial);
- 16) Zip Code.

The City of Minneapolis' annual State of the City Report describes the City's Housing Condition Rating System (no. 12 above) (see Appendix 1 below for a detailed description of each category). This rating system has nine categories, which run from Condition 1, buildings that are in excellent condition, through 2, Very Good; 3, Good; 4, Average Plus; 5, Average; 6, Average Minus; 7, Fair; 8, Poor, all the way to Condition 9, residential structures that are in "bad" condition i.e. condemned and uninhabitable.

In view of the Sheridan neighborhood's concern with substandard housing, it was decided to concentrate only on those parcels categorized as Condition Code 6, 7, 8, or 9. The STAY/NRP Housing Steering Committee purchased a list of Sheridan parcels

categorized as Condition 6 or worse. It also purchased a map showing each parcel by condition code and whether it was a homestead property or not.

There were a total of 109 residential parcels on this list, as follows:

- eighty-five Condition 6 residential buildings (4 of which were apartment buildings);
- twenty-two Condition 7 residential buildings (4 of which were apartment buildings);
- two Condition 8 residential buildings; and
- no Condition 9 residential buildings.

4. Sheridan Housing Condition Survey

The Sheridan housing condition survey was intended as a two-part process. Stage one involved a *visual* survey to identify and record the condition of those buildings most in need of rehabilitation as well as those in need of demolition. Stage two involved a further stage of investigation using City of Minneapolis records in an attempt to ascertain whether the interiors of these buildings were also in poor condition.

The City's list of the 109 parcels classified as Condition 6 or worse initially appeared, in theory at least, to provide a sound basis from which to proceed with the survey which would identify the 50 or so buildings in the worst condition in Sheridan. In practice, however, the usefulness of this type of information depends on whether the list is maintained in an accurate and up-to-date form. In this case, the updating of the information depended on the timing of data collection by the various City Departments that supplied the information that forms the basis of this list. In the case of data from the Assessor's Office, for example, this information is only systematically updated every five years. As a result, some housing in Sheridan may have been refurbished since the list was updated and will, therefore, be in better condition than this list otherwise indicates; likewise, other housing may have deteriorated in condition since the list was last updated and be in worse condition than the list records. Consequently, accomplishing a comprehensive housing condition survey in the field involved excluding, for example, any of the 109 parcels that appeared to be in good or excellent condition, and parcels where the structure had already been completely demolished; the survey also involved, however,

additionally including housing, not included on the City's list of Condition 6 or worse parcels, that appeared in the field to be of a condition corresponding to Condition 6 or worse.

Design of the Survey Form:

Before going out in the field to undertake the survey, it was necessary to initially design a survey form. Of the NPCR reports held in the CURA library, only the Whittier Homeownership Center Targeting Project report contained a copy of a survey form. The information recorded on the condition of each building was not detailed, however, because other information such as the types of police calls was also included in the Whittier survey. Other NPCR reports, however, in their discussion of building condition, did mention some features of neighborhood housing that could be included in a survey form being designed for Sheridan.

Copies of building condition survey forms were also solicited from seven neighborhood organizations with NRP housing programs. Again, none had produced particularly detailed survey forms. In most cases, a drive-by windshield survey to identify boarded-up buildings had sufficed (see Appendix 5 for a list of these neighborhood groups).

Sheridan's Neighborhood Housing Condition Survey Form was designed to record the condition of the exterior of the housing for each parcel in an efficient manner in the field (Appendix 2). As can be seen from the form, once the quite detailed information on the condition of each building has been recorded, the completed form provides the basis for categorizing the housing into those that are in a:

- good condition (needing no or only minor repair);
- moderate condition (in need of more serious repair, but still worthy of rehabilitation);
- fair condition (needing major reconstruction, the cost of which may not be warranted);
- and
- very badly deteriorated condition (worthy of consideration for demolition).

The Photograph and Property Information Form was designed to contain a photograph of each property and additional space for the inclusion of the information contained in the City's Parcel Information List (Appendix 3). The primary reason for the inclusion of a photograph of each parcel was to supplement the information contained in the Housing Condition Survey Form. The idea was that members of the STAY/NRP Steering Committee as well as neighborhood residents could use the survey to evaluate for themselves which buildings were most in need of refurbishment and/or demolition - often a somewhat subjective judgment. The survey was also intended for ongoing use during the course of the writing of Sheridan's action plan.

During the course of the survey, on several occasions, neighbors would offer comments about particular buildings, which were added to the survey forms as appropriate. In two separate cases, for example, neighbors in parcels adjacent to housing in particularly poor condition provided their names and telephone numbers because they were interested in buying all or part of an adjacent parcel, if the building were to be demolished. This information was added to the survey form for the building in question.

The Survey Parcels:

While the actual survey in the field involved a quick visual inspection of every residential building in Sheridan, a total of 133 housing parcels (plus a house on the rear of the King Koin Launderette commercial parcel) ultimately warranted the completion of a survey form (and a photograph). These included those 109 parcels identified as of Condition 6 or worse in the City's Parcel Information List, and an additional 24 which appeared in the field to be of a Condition equivalent to 6 or worst (even though this housing was classified as in better condition in the City's list) (the folder containing the Survey Forms and Photograph Forms is held in STAY's neighborhood office).

Of these 133 parcels, 11 parcels were identified as in the worst condition based on this exterior visual survey alone. An additional 36 parcels were identified as the group of housing next most in need of significant improvement to their exterior condition.

Map of the 133 Survey Parcels (and the house on the rear of the King Koin Launderette commercial parcel):

A map was produced to show the spatial distribution and condition of the 133 parcels identified in this Survey (this map is also held in STAY's neighborhood office).

The condition of buildings were color-coded as follows:

- Green: Good/excellent condition;
- Yellow: Moderate/fair condition (needing significant repair but worthy of rehabilitation);
- Yellow with Red Dot: The worst of the large group of moderate/fair housing (that is, in poor condition but not necessarily needing immediate demolition); and
- Red: Poor/badly deteriorated (potentially warranting consideration of immediate demolition due to structural or other problems).

The number of parcels of each condition on the map were as follows:

- Green: 20 parcels (of these 20 parcels, 5 parcels were included as "green" because the buildings on these parcels had already been demolished by the time of the survey)
- Yellow: 102 parcels (36 of these parcels were identified as the worst of the 102 "yellow" parcels);
- Yellow with Red Dot: 9 parcels; and
- Red: 2 parcels.

A major reason for producing the map was to identify whether there were any clusters of buildings in particularly poor condition. In fact the map showed that the buildings in poor condition in Sheridan tend to be randomly distributed throughout the whole neighborhood. An awareness of this fact is important when the types of funding schemes to address improving their condition are being considered. Addressing a large cluster of buildings in poor condition in one particular part of a neighborhood presents

different opportunities and constraints for improving their condition versus a situation where the buildings in poor condition are more generally dispersed throughout the whole neighborhood, as is the case in Sheridan.

City of Minneapolis Hazardous Building Inspections Department lists:

In order to obtain further information about housing in poor condition which was not necessarily evident from an exterior survey, the lists of Sheridan's boarded-up housing as well as its condemned housing were obtained from the Hazardous Building Inspections Division of the City of Minneapolis (Appendix 4 contains the four parcels that are condemned and/or boarded).

Sheridan's "Hit List" of its "Worst" Buildings:

By adding parcels identified from sources in addition to the visual building condition survey (such as the City's condemned and boarded buildings lists), a "hit list" of the 59 parcels in the worst condition was produced (Appendix 4). These 59 parcels comprise:

- the 11 parcels in the worst condition (from the visual survey) (5 of which were also identified as in poor condition in Sheridan's August 1996 mail survey of residents and/or Crystal's (1996/97 Sheridan intern) August 1996 door-to-door survey);
- the 36 parcels in the next worst condition (from the visual survey) (8 of which were also identified as in poor condition in the mail survey and/or Crystal's survey);
- one building identified as both boarded-up and condemned (from the City's lists) (although the visual survey did not identify this building as boarded up);
- three condemned buildings (from the City's list);
- eight buildings additionally identified as in poor condition in either the August 1996 mail survey of residents or Crystal's August 1996 door-to-door survey
- (plus one housing unit on the rear of the King Koin Launderette commercial parcel (the Launderette itself also appeared to have residential occupants in the upper floor of this commercial (launderette) building with boarded-up ground floor).

5. Minneapolis Housing Inspections Department Code Violation Data

The final stage of the research was to access the City of Minneapolis' Housing Inspections Department Code Violation Order dataset. This step was necessary in order to ascertain information on the condition of the interiors of the 59 buildings included in the "hit list." The City maintains this information for each building for the past seven years.

It should be noted that, for privacy reasons, the City's Housing Inspections Department cannot release detailed information about code violation orders for each parcel. The only information that is available to the public is whether a building has:

- current outstanding code violation orders or not (the number of orders or the severity of the problem associated with each order is not available to the public (for example, orders can be for something as minor as the grass in the yard needing mowing, or as serious as structural cracks to the foundation of a building));
- the date by which the current outstanding code violations are to be addressed (but not the individual dates by which each code violation is to be addressed); and
- code violation orders in the past which have already been taken care of (information which is not of crucial interest for this research because the problems associated with these code violation orders have presumably already been attended to).

The above information was recorded on the housing condition survey form for each of the individual 59 "hit list" buildings, as well as for the King Koin Launderette and the house on the rear of the Launderette commercial parcel.

It should also be noted, however, that the City's Housing Inspections Department tends to inspect buildings that are potential risks to public health and/or safety primarily only in response to residents' complaints. As such, this dataset is more likely to contain more code violation orders against rental properties (where the residents contact the City in order to report public health and safety problems). Homesteaded/owner occupied residential properties are, correspondingly, less likely to have as many code violations against them (because the owners are unlikely to contact the City about public and safety problems in their *own* property; in addition, adjacent neighbors will only be likely to do so if the problems are clearly visible from the outside of the homesteaded property). The fact

that a parcel does *not* currently or in the past have code violation orders against it, therefore, does not imply that it is in any better condition than another parcel with previous and outstanding code violation orders - this situation may merely reflect the fact that, for whatever reason, complaints have been received by the City about one property and not the other.

In addition, it should be noted that just because a property has had code violation orders against it in the past, does not imply that these were the responsibility of the current owner. The code violation order information for the previous seven years remains with the building (rather than with the owner (who can change numerous times over the life of a building)).

6. Conclusions

This research project produced a "hit list" of 59 residential parcels. These 59 structures were identified as those properties which are currently in the worst condition in the Sheridan neighborhood on the basis of a visual building condition survey and other sources of information discussed above.

This list of housing which is in the worst physical condition in the neighborhood is intended to be a useful resource for STAY's NRP Steering Committee's initial task of determining appropriate funding schemes to improve the condition of substandard housing in Sheridan as part of its action plan.

This report itself was designed as a record of the methodology followed in identifying the "hit list." The information in this report on the building condition survey and its methodology is also intended to help provide a sound basis for justifying the choice of particular funding schemes by STAY's NRP Steering Committee when it reaches the stage of producing its action plan.

Appendices:

1. City of Minneapolis Housing Condition Rating System.
2. Sheridan Neighborhood Housing Condition Survey Form.
3. Sheridan Neighborhood Housing Condition Survey: Photograph and Property Information.
4. Matrix of Sheridan parcels with buildings in the "worst" condition, showing the source of the information identifying these particular buildings as the "worst."
5. Contact Persons.

Appendix 1: City of Minneapolis Housing Condition Rating System

Condition 1, Excellent; Condition 2, Very Good; Condition 3, Good

The top three classifications represent a well-built house with no observable maintenance requirements. Everything is in perfect condition.

Condition 4, Average Plus

This classification represents houses with no observable defects in structure and only minor maintenance requirements such as small plaster or stucco cracks. Minor wear and tear on woodwork and cabinets may be noticeable, and it may need some paint or shingles, but no maintenance items have yet been deferred to the point where permanent damage exists.

Condition 5, Average

This is the midway range in the condition category and represents the largest grouping. The assumption is that the average structure is in satisfactory condition and is a desirable property as living or working quarters. The maintenance requirements are being satisfactorily covered and the buildings are perfectly salable as is. No major defects or maintenance requirements are observable, but a considerable number of minor items can be seen. Many items such as the roof, plumbing, heating, windows, cabinet work and exterior are showing some deterioration but are still reliable and not in need of immediate replacement.

Condition 6, Average Minus; Condition 7, Fair

These classifications represent houses that have considerable deferred maintenance, with permanent damage to structural items beginning to show. Windows, window frames, and sills may be deteriorating from water in the wood. Floors and roof may have some sag. Plaster may have some water stains or damage. The foundation has cracks, but no major settling. Considerable wear and tear on woodwork and cabinets may be noticeable and cabinets should probably be replaced. Heating and plumbing are beginning to show considerable wear and may be unreliable.

Condition 8, Poor

The last two classifications represent houses which show considerable damage to major structural items. The foundation has large cracks, and settling may be substantial. Substantial settling may be noticeable in floors with doors and windows no longer square. Rotting wood, large plaster and stucco cracks may be observable in several places. Heating and plumbing is unreliable. House is still habitable, but probably beyond the present occupant's capacity to restore it or even maintain it.

Condition 9, Bad

These houses are condemned and uninhabitable.

Source: The City of Minneapolis' annual State of the City Report.

Appendix 2: Sheridan Neighborhood Housing Condition Survey Form

Property Address: _____ Mpls Cond.Code _____

Condition: Excellent-Good / Already Demolished [*Stop survey - no need to proceed!*]

Housing Classification/Use:

Single Family _____
 2-Unit Family _____
 >2 Family Unit, No. Units _____
 Apt. Bldg., No. Units _____

Description (re. size):

No. stories _____
 No. bays _____
 Basement Y / N

Building Materials/Condition:

Roof _____	Exc.-Good / Mod. / Fair-Poor / Badly-deteriorated
Dormers _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Chimney _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Walls/Cladding: Siding _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Plaster/stucco _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Brick _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Stone _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Openings: Door(s) _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Windows _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Exterior Paintwork / Trim _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Porch / Balcony _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Foundation _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Garage / Adj. Structure _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Yard (maintenance) _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d
Perimeter Fence _____	E-G / M / F-P / B-d

Overall Condition/Maintenance Needs:

Sound/Minor Repair (Exc./Good)	_____	(Worthy of)
Major Rehabilitation (Moderate)	_____	(Rehabilitation)
Major Reconstruction (Fair/Poor)	_____	(Rehabilitation)
Rebuilding Necessary (Very Badly Deteriorated)	_____	(Questionable)

Architectural/Historic Quality/ies: _____

Appears vacant Y / N Boarded Up Y / N For Sale Y / N

Parcel (bldg:lot ratio): Underbuilt / OK / Overbuilt _____

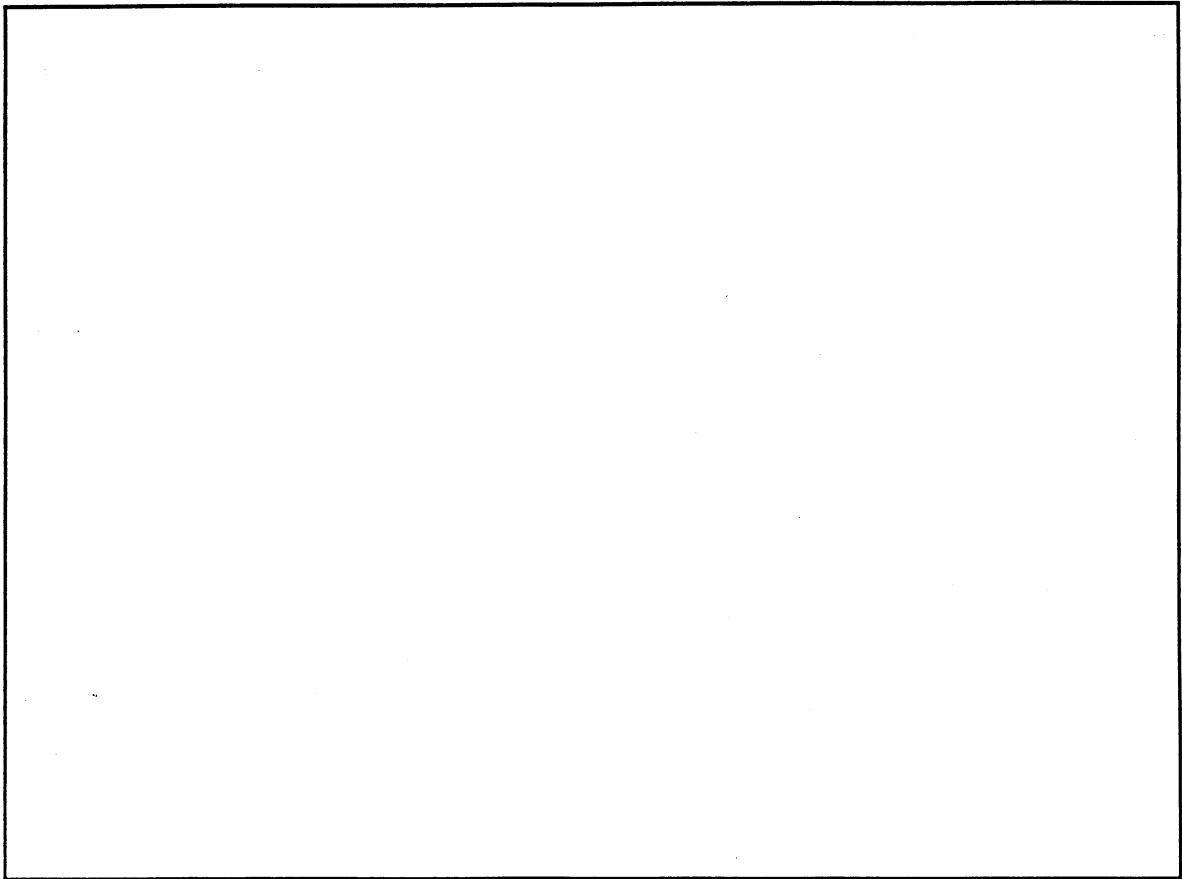
Location: Corner Lot Y / N; Adj. Vacant Lot Y / N; Other _____

Condition of block as a whole: Good / Mod. / Poor

Traffic Volume: High / Mod. / Low

Additional Observations: _____

**Appendix 3: Sheridan Neighborhood Housing Condition Survey:
Photograph and Property Information**



June/July 1996

Property Address: _____

Owner's Name: _____ Tel: _____

Owner's Address _____

Taxpayer Name: _____ Tel: _____

Taxpayer Address: _____

Use Code: _____ Homestead: _____ Zone Code: _____ Zip Code: _____

Property Type: _____ Ward: _____ Property Type Category (Res/Apt/Com): _____

Lot Width: _____ Lot Depth: _____ Lot Area: _____

Additional Information: _____

**Appendix 4: Matrix of parcels with buildings in the “worst” condition,
showing the source of information identifying these buildings as the “worst.”**

Address	Linda's "worst 11" bldgs.	Linda's "next worst 36 bldgs"	Mpls. boarded bldgs. list	Mpls. condemned bldgs. list	Aug.96 mail survey	Cathy Lee	Aug.96 Crystal survey
1417-19 NE 6th St.	X						X
1403 NE 4th St.	X						
1324 NE 4th St.	X						
1612 University NE	X						
1613 NE 3rd St.	X				X		X
1530 NE 3rd St.	X				X		
1113 Main St. NE	X						
1221 Main St. NE	X						
304 12th Av. NE	X						
340 15th Av. NE	X						X
202 14th Av. NE	X				X		
1313 NE 3rd St.			X	X	X		
1401-03 NE 3rd St.				X (partial)	X	X	
1326 NE 5th St.				X (partial)			
1619 California St.				X (Utilities)			
1433 NE 5th St.		X					X
1323 NE 5th St.		X					X
1410 NE 3rd St.		X					X
331 14th Av. NE		X					X
1609 NE 3rd St.							X

Address	Linda's "worst 11" bldgs.	Linda's "next worst 36 bldgs"	Mpls. boarded bldgs. list	Mpls. condemned bldgs. list	Aug.96 mail survey	Cathy Lee	Aug.96 Crystal survey
1115 NE 4th St.		X					
1409 University NE		X					
1317 NE 3rd St.		X					
1517 NE 3rd St.		X					
1623 NE 2nd St.		X					
1108 NE 2nd St.		X					
1423 Main St. NE		X					
1510 Grand St.		X					
1324 Grand St.		X					
611 Broadway St.		X					
310 13th Av. NE		X					
118-20 14th Av. NE		X					
156 14th Av. NE		X					
337 14th Av. NE		X					
133 14th Av. NE		X					
26 18th Av. NE		X					

Plus: King Koin Launderette parcel

- 1235-37 NE 4th St. (King Koin - boarded up, residential above)
- 412 13th Av. NE (house at rear King Koin)

Appendix 5: Contact Persons

- "Print Room"** Tim David, Public Works Department, "Print Room," [map resources for public use], City of Minneapolis, 309 2nd Avenue Street, Rm 301, Minneapolis, 55401; Tel: 673-2431; Fax: 673-2048.
- Housing Inspections:** Jose Cervantes, Tel: 673-5857; Jodi Molinaar, Tel: 673-5850, City of Minneapolis, Housing Inspections Department, 250 S. 4th Street, Rm 300, Minneapolis, 55415-1616.
- Building Inspections:** Lynn Ogren, Building Inspector, Hazardous Building Inspections, City of Minneapolis, Inspections Division, 250 S. 4th Street, Rm 300, Minneapolis, 55415-1616; Tel: 673-5862; Fax: 673-5819.
- Source of list of 7 neighborhoods with housing programs:** Gretchen Nicholls, Design Center for American Urban Landscape, University of Minnesota, 1313 5th Street SE - Suite 202, Minneapolis 55414; Tel: 527-185, ext. 414:
- 7 Neighborhoods with housing programs:**
- (1) Jordan Area Community Council, Darlene Walser, tel: 521-8436 [sent 1 page survey form - random survey of 10% of the blocks - Feb. 1, 1992];
 - (2) Bancroft Neighborhood, Stephanie Schmidt, tel: 724-5313 [didn't do survey];
 - (3) Powerhorn Park, Carol Jacobson, tel: 722-4817 [provided advice];
 - (4) Central Neighborhood, John Paul, tel: 822-3302 [only did windshield survey for boarded-up buildings];
 - (5) Windom Park, Diane Loeffler, tel: 781-1307 [agreed to send survey];
 - (6) Lyndale Neighborhood, Harry Jensen, tel: 824-9402 [faxed form: not too detailed];
 - (7) St. Anthony West, Susan Whitaker, tel: 789-2605 [didn't do survey].
- Faculty Mentor:** Barbara Lukermann, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota, 153 Hubert Humphrey Center; Tel. 625-4310.
- Community Mentor:** Jim Gabler, Whittier Housing Corporation, 2828 Harriet Avenue S.